

MINUTES
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee
February 22, 2021

The meeting of the Sharon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chair Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis remotely via Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's emergency declaration regarding public gatherings. The following, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee members were in attendance:

Members Present

Chair:	Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis
Vice Chair:	Ms. Dru Ledbetter
Clerk:	
Other Members:	Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath Mr. Lajos Kamocsay Ms. Ellie Zinno Ms. Marjorie Mitlin Lt. Stephen Coffey Ms. Zainab Mohammed

Members Absent

Other Member Wendy Alexis-Janvier

Others Present

Select Board Member Hanna R. Switekowski

Administrative Items

Reminder of Meeting Norms

Chair Pierre-Louis reminded the committee of the agreed norms.

Email Correspondence Update

Chair Pierre Louis noted that we received correspondence in favor of working with the Select board on changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day. We also received correspondence regarding support of FLES.

Chair Pierre-Louis asked whether the committee wanted to advise the Select Board on advisement of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mr. Kamocsay shared that he didn't believe that the language program was a DEI issue and that it should be the responsibility of the School Committee to make a decision on this matter. Ms. Ledbetter shared that she agrees with Mr. Kamocsay, as the program is more about language learning and not DEI. She shared that

we should be cognizant of the matters we get involved in as to not lose credibility. Ms. Zinno shared that people are thinking it is a DEI issue because language learning is a sharing of culture. If we wanted to take up the issue, there would not be sentiment that this is a diversity matter. Ms. Mitlin asked for clarification on what age level participates in this program and what language. Chair Pierre-Louis shared the statement from Mrs. Alexis-Janvier. Mr. Kamocsay clarified the languages taught at the Sharon public schools. Ms. Mitlin shared that language exposure is valuable and we should weigh-in whether it's in our purview or not. Ms. Ledbetter shared that we can say we support the program but it's not in our purview and that the budget may not support this. Ms. Mohammed wanted clarification on what our vote would do for the people making decisions on the program. She added that if the town supports the FLES program, our role should be to support what the town. Rev. Dr. Kondrath shared that there may be budget issues on a number of topics that we have opinions on, however we have a moral responsibility to speak on those things despite the budget issue. He also shared the correlation between language and white supremacy. He shared how as a child he asked his father to teach him Hungarian, and his father said no because you have to learn to be an American. He believes language in this country is huge thing. People are being told to go back to their country when they have an accent. He believes language is part of DEI, as it is an issue of equity and inclusion. His father wasn't saying you won't be American but you won't be white. Lt. Coffey believe it is a School Committee issue, however we should be supportive of anything that helps brake down barriers. Mrs. Pierre-Louis shared that this is definitely a DEI issue, she shared the same thoughts on budget, and whether our opinion would matter. Mr. Kamocsay shares that an equity issue would be the fact that kids that are on IEP (Individual Education Plan) are not allowed to take a foreign language.

Chair went around to request vote on advisement as a committee on FLES:

Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis - Yay
Ms. Dru Ledbetter - Yay
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath - Yay
Mr. Lajos Kamocsay - Abstain
Ms. Ellie Zinno - Yay
Ms. Marjorie Mitlin - Yay
Lt. Stephen Coffey - Yay
Ms. Zainab Mohammed – Yay

Grant Update

Lt. Coffey shared that he is still researching grant opportunities. However, grant support for DEI training initiatives are not available. He shared a summary of the Mass Humanities and Mass Cultural Council organizations that might be an opportunity for grants. We may have an opportunity with the Mass Cultural Council at the end of the summer. He will follow-up and share updates at the next meeting. He will also work with local business to see how we can work with them on grants.

Resource Team Update

Mrs. Zinno has been researching other towns to see what they include on their page in terms of resource. Mrs. Pierre-Louis shared that Arlington may be a page to view.

South West Advisory Planning (SWAP) meeting update

Ms. Ledbetter shared details on her attendance of the SWAP committee meeting. They have an advisory planning panel looking to begin a DEI committee. Acton, Canton, and Sharon were invited to attend to share their experience and steps on starting a DEI committee.

Finalize date for DE&I Training

During this session the committee had to share dates they are available for training for the DEI and Select board committee training.

Potential co-host viewing of Crip Camp with Commission on Disabilities

The Commission on Disability would like to do a sponsorship of Crip Camp. Chair Pierre-Louis shared a video on Crip Camp. The committee agreed to support and sponsor the program.

Advisement of Select Board and joint meeting Indigenous People Day

Chair Pierre-Louis shared a status on the next steps for a joint meeting of the Select board and DEI committee on Indigenous People's Day. She also shared that this needs to go to a town meeting for a vote. If we want to do Indigenous People's Day/Columbus Day we can advise the Selectboard on that. She also shared more details on logistics of the joint meeting which would include organization that represent Indigenous People. Select Board Member, Switekowski suggested March 25th.

Police Chief Search

Chair Pierre-Louis shared that the Chief is retiring. There will be a search process by the Selectboard. The question is whether we would want some role in the search process. Question: Do we want a role in the search process?

Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis - Yes
Ms. Dru Ledbetter - Yes
Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath – Abstain
Mr. Lajos Kamocsay - Yes
Ms. Ellie Zinno - Yes
Ms. Marjorie Mitlin - Yes
Lt. Stephen Coffey - Abstain
Ms. Zainab Mohammed – Yes

Topics Not Anticipated with 48 hours

- Ms. Mitlin shared that Sharon Plurism Network is sponsoring a community speak out on substance abuse on May 23rd.
- Chair Pierre-Louis shared the Black Success in Sharon event, Chinese New Year event, SHS Black Student Union Black History Month event, and SREA book club.

Adjourn

MOTION: (Ledbetter - Kamocsay) To adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

VOTED: 8-0-0 **PASSES**

Mrs. Kiana Pierre-Louis - Yes

Ms. Dru Ledbetter - Yes

Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath – Yes

Mr. Lajos Kamocsay - Yes

Ms. Ellie Zinno - Yes

Ms. Marjorie Mitlin - Yes

Lt. Stephen Coffey - Yes

Ms. Zainab Mohammed – Yes